



First Lts. Abe McIntire, Alex Kahn, and Geo Comacho, with the 4th Brigade Support Battalion, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, conduct sling load operations on July 2, 2017, during a rotation at the National Training Center at Fort Irwin, Calif. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Rodrigo Rocha)

A CRISIS Exists: An Easy Mnemonic to Remember the Sustainment Principles

■ By Mark Solseth and Col. Brent Coryell

The eight sustainment principles discussed in Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 4-0, Sustainment, can be useful during planning, but many sustainers struggle to remember them. Furthermore, when they are used as guidance, they often add little to the planning effort.

In this article, we introduce a mnemonic to help users remember the sustainment principles of anticipation, continuity, responsiveness, integration, simplicity, improvisation, survivability, and economy. We also offer ways to

use them more effectively to develop commander's guidance and mission statements.

The Need for a Mnemonic

Examples of the many useful mnemonics used by the Army include PMESII-PT [political, military, economic, social, infrastructure, information, physical environment, and time], METT-TC [mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops, time available, and civil considerations], and AS-COPE [area, structures, capabilities,

organizations, people, and events]. Yet, no mnemonic exists for the eight sustainment principles described in ADP 4-0. Additionally, some of these principles are used in sustainment units' mission statements and commanders' key tasks, but often they are used in ways that are not particularly helpful to enabling mission command.

Remembering the principles is not only useful for sustainers but also for others on the staff who can use the principles as a guide to assess courses of action, plans, and orders. These

principles provide a useful approach to test aspects of the plan during development and sometimes are included as criteria during course of action analysis.

A CRISIS Exists

In order for planning to begin, some kind of crisis must first exist, so the mnemonic we propose is “A CRISIS Exists.” The first eight letters in this mnemonic represent the eight sustainment principles.

Using “A CRISIS Exists” helps the planner or commander remember all the principles, which they can then consider using to provide guidance for planning and operations.

An Issue of Use

Now that we have a way of remembering the sustainment principles, how do we make them useful? Tactical-level commanders often do not use the sustainment principles effectively; instead, the principles become buzzwords in mission statements and commander’s intents.

At the National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California, observer-coach/trainers often see brigade support battalion (BSB) mission statements that contain elements of the sustainment principles. However, the principles add little to the mission command process because they are used in nondescriptive ways that add nothing useful to the commander’s intent, which subordinates use to exercise disciplined initiative.

For example, a mission statement states, “On order (or no later than date time group), the 52nd BSB occupies and defends a brigade support area (BSA) [or logistics support area (LSA)] in the vicinity of grid coordinate NV123459 and conducts logistics and health service support operations in support of a specific brigade combat team’s (or sustainment brigade’s) operation in Area of Operation Desert in order to ensure freedom of action, extend operational reach, or prolong endurance.”

Orders like this often have modifiers added to the end saying some-

thing like, “the 52nd BSB occupies and defends a BSA (or LSA) ... and conducts anticipatory, responsive, and continuous logistics and health service support operations in support of a specific brigade combat team’s (or sustainment brigade’s) operation.”

Similarly, a commander’s intent often includes phrases such as, “My intent is to provide continuous, responsive, and anticipatory logistics support to units throughout the area of responsibility to facilitate”

These statements may sound good, but are sustainment principles useful modifiers for logistics support? What do the words mean regarding mission accomplishment? Do they add anything that further enables mission command? We would argue that often they do not add much that causes subordinates to change the way they execute the mission or do anything other than their doctrinal mission.

The Sustainment Principles

How can the sustainment principles be useful for issuing guidance? The first step is to understand the principles. Figure 1 on page 68 provides the doctrinal description of the principles from ADP 4-0. The definitions presented are from the publication; however, we present them in a different sequence so that they follow the mnemonic that we have introduced.

Anticipation. Anticipation is the ability to foresee operational requirements and initiate actions that satisfy a response without waiting for an operation order or fragmentary order. Sustainment commanders and staffs visualize future operations, identify required support, and start the process of acquiring and providing the sustainment that best supports the operation.

Try to act, not react. For example, anticipate that air assault Soldiers will need contingency truck transportation in the event aircraft cannot fly. Anticipate that dismounted Soldiers will be tired of walking after completing the mission and will need vehicles to return them to their tactical assembly areas.

Sustainment planners who antic-

ipate requirements before maneuver task force commanders ask for them and posture vehicles and drivers ahead of time are more successful. If there is no “pull” from the supported units, anticipate the requirements and “push” them.

Tactical unit S-4s should have a book, reference, or tool with planning factors for sustaining their types of unit. The planning factors should include vehicle consumption rates, ammunition basic loads, and water consumption rates by environment type.

Continuity. Continuity is providing uninterrupted sustainment across all levels of war. It is achieved through a system of integrated and focused networks that sustainment to support capabilities and operations across all levels of war. Continuity ensures confidence in sustainment, which allows commanders to have freedom of action, operational reach, and prolonged endurance.

At the tactical level, continuity relates to having a battle rhythm for resupply that is based on synchronized and timely commodity distribution. It is the ability to deliver the right quantity of supplies and services at the right time and place.

Continuity involves physical distribution networks, systems, and data communications; it uses interchangeable and modular exchange distribution assets such as flat racks. Continuity’s goal is to reduce distribution cycle times and provide required materiel at the right time.

Responsiveness. The ability to react to changing requirements in order to maintain support is responsiveness. Through responsive sustainment, commanders maintain operational focus and pressure, set the tempo of friendly operations to prevent exhaustion, replace ineffective units, and extend operational reach.

The ability to monitor and manage end-to-end sustainment activities is fundamental to reducing friction in a logistics pipeline. A practiced and enforced logistics status (LOGSTAT) reporting process is instrumental to

this. Combat training center observer-coach/trainers have witnessed that preformatted Joint Capabilities Release LOGSTAT reports work very well for this purpose.

Integration. Integration is combining all the elements of sustainment (tasks, functions, systems, processes, and organizations) with operations to ensure unity of command and unity of effort. Army forces integrate sustainment with joint forces and multinational operations to maximize the complementary and reinforcing effects of each service and national resource.

At the tactical level, this includes integrating enabler units into the sustainment plan to ensure they are supported and being clear on who is integrating attached units into their support plans and how to report plans during task organization and boundary changes.

Simplicity. The processes and procedures that minimize the complexity of sustainment provide simplicity. Clear tasks, standardized and interoperable procedures, and clearly defined command relationships contribute to simplicity.

To keep sustainment simple, use an easy-to-produce support matrix that focuses on who gets what (key commodities and amounts), when, where, and how (supply point, unit distri-

bution, throughput, logistics release point, or forward logistics element). Clear standard operating procedures and a routinely published matrix greatly assist in keeping sustainment simple because they provide a way for everyone to know what to expect.

Improvisation. The ability to adapt sustainment operations to unexpected situations or circumstances is improvisation. It includes creating, arranging, or fabricating what is needed from what is available.

The sustainment commander must apply operational art to visualize complex operations and understand what is possible at the tactical level. These skills enable commanders to improvise operational and tactical actions when enemy actions or unexpected events disrupt sustainment.

Survivability. Joint Publication 3-34, Joint Engineer Operations, states that survivability includes all aspects of protecting personnel, weapons, and supplies while simultaneously deceiving the enemy. Survivability permits forces to avoid or withstand hostile actions or environmental conditions while retaining the ability to fulfill their primary mission. Commanders often must rely on redundant sustainment capabilities and alternate support plans in order to mitigate risks and minimize disruptions to sustainment.

Economy. Economy is providing sustainment resources in an efficient manner to enable a commander to employ all assets to achieve the greatest effect possible. It is achieved through efficient management and discipline, prioritizing and allocating resources, and capitalizing on joint interdependencies. It can also be achieved by using contracted support and host-nation resources to reduce or eliminate the use of military resources.

Practical Use of the Principles

While perhaps helpful in the aggregate, some of the principles are paradoxical. For example, is it necessary to improvise if requirements are properly anticipated?

We want sustainment forces to be responsive, but the ability to respond quickly likely requires proximity to supported forces, which may affect survivability. We want support to be integrated into the brigade combat team's scheme of maneuver, but in the offense, that means moving support areas, which affects continuity in the support plan.

With those considerations as background, how does one use the principles of sustainment in a helpful manner? Rather than using them as mission statement buzzwords, commanders and staffs should use them to describe how they want to position

The Sustainment Principles "A CRISIS Exists"	
Anticipation	Foresee requirements and proactively take action without an operation order.
Continuity	Have a resupply battle rhythm based on synchronized and timely commodity distribution.
Responsiveness	React to changing requirements and respond to meet the needs.
Integration	Combine all operations of sustainment with operations for unity of command and effort.
Simplicity	Reduce the complexity of sustainment through clarity of tasks and standardized procedures.
Improvisation	Adapt sustainment operations to unexpected situations.
Survivability	Protect personnel, weapons, and supplies while deceiving the enemy.
Economy	Provide resources in a manner that employs all assets to achieve the greatest effect possible.
The observation at the National Training Center is that tactical-level commanders do not use the principles effectively. Using "A CRISIS Exists" helps the planner and commander remember all of the Army sustainment principles, which they can then consider using to provide guidance for planning and operations.	

Figure 1. The mnemonic "A CRISIS Exists" can be used to remember the sustainment principles found in Army Doctrine Publication 4-0, Sustainment.

assets, sustain forces, and accept risk. Here are some practical examples.

Anticipation. When units have enough time to thoroughly plan an operation, they can anticipate requirements through detailed coordination and well-developed logistics estimates. If communications are disrupted during execution and LOGSTATs are not received, sustainers will not wait. They will push supplies forward after estimating what units need based on time and operational tempo.

Commanders should be willing to assume risk in economy and push supplies to supported units early in an operation without being asked to do so. Building two types of prepared packages based on historical averages and having “speed balls” (prepackaged mission configured loads) of water and ammunition on standby and ready to go within 30 minutes are two ways of anticipating requirements. Units may also anticipate seasonal class IX (repair parts) surges like batteries in cold weather or additional ice and water in hot weather.

Continuity. Being thoroughly involved in the supported force’s planning process, positioning liaison noncommissioned officers forward, and ensuring robust communications and reports will help sustainers maintain continuity with supported forces. Coordinating for throughput and employing a forward logistics element when the unit is on the move will ensure that support capability is in place while other elements are moving.

Practiced primary, alternate, contingency, and emergency communication plans are essential to continuity. Cross-training within sections and platoons can also improve continuity for high-tempo and 24-hour operations.

Responsiveness. In order to be responsive during an operation, the BSB should position support areas far forward, keep supplies uploaded, and ensure units are ready to move quickly. To do this, the commander must accept risks to survivability and economy.

Integration. In a high-tempo offensive operation, a BSB may integrate

its capabilities into forward units by reinforcing the forward support companies with additional fuel and ammunition assets. The BSB should plan to recover these assets once supplies are consumed by forward units. It can then transition to a more traditional sustainment approach that employs supply point and unit distribution.

Another example of integration is placing sustainment planners on the brigade staff (and with forward units) to assist with planning.

Simplicity. When a BSB does not have much experience supporting the entire brigade in the field, it could initially keep things simple by primarily using supply point distribution from the BSA. It can then progress toward executing logistics release point operations, especially for far-forward or widely dispersed units.

Another example of employing simplicity is operating from a single LSA rather than as base clusters when a unit has not worked closely with its subordinate companies in a newly task-organized combat sustainment support battalion.

Improvisation. Improvisation is used to fill a capability gap. Sustainers should identify the requirement, the capabilities, the gap, and then figure out how to make up the difference.

Early in an unexpected deployment, a unit has not had the time to plan thoroughly. The commander’s intent should encourage sustainers in the torch and advance parties to be creative until the rest of the force arrives. This improvisation may include contracted and host-nation support or the creation of a logistics task force made up of pooled resources from multiple units until more cohesive forces arrive. The commander should underwrite risks that sustainers take to make things happen.

Survivability. Survivability can be used to describe acceptable risk. For example, the BSB commander may state that he wants equipment in the support area (or base clusters) widely dispersed in order to mitigate an artillery threat that could significantly affect the BSB’s ability to provide

support. Alternately, he may want the formation positioned closely together to better secure a perimeter. Priority in preparation should be placed on conducting convoy battle drills and rehearsing increased perimeter security and casualty evacuation.

Economy. Once a BSB has a robust reporting structure, it can rely on units pulling resources based on their LOGSTATs. Before sending assets forward, the BSB should still confirm requirements during logistics synchronization meetings.

Ensuring discipline in trans-loading fuel and water assets minimizes the assets on the road and provides economy; put one full tanker on the road rather than three that have a third of their load.

While this article provides some specific examples of how to use the principles of sustainment, our broader point is that commanders and staffs should make the principles useful to subordinates and planners. Make sure that their inclusion in a mission statement and commander’s intent means something, and describe what that meaning is if it is not clear during subordinates’ confirmation and back briefs.

Having a mnemonic for the eight sustainment principles and some ideas about how to use them more descriptively in guidance will increase the S-3s’ ability to make the principles meaningful to the operations process. By using “A CRISIS Exists,” you can do the same.

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